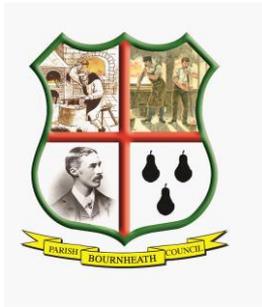


# Bournheath Parish Council



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## **Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England review of Bromsgrove District Council warding arrangements FURTHER LIMITED CONSULTATION**

Comment submitted 4<sup>th</sup> April 2013 via LGBCE website.

The Parish Council responded to the consultation which ended on 08/01/2013 content with the proposals at that time apart from bringing to your attention an anomaly regarding the proposed electorate numbers for the Woodvale ward.

The Further Limited Consultation now proposes a massive change to this parish by abolishing the Woodvale Ward, divorcing this parish from its established community of the neighbouring parishes of Dodford with Grafton and Belbroughton and Fairfield, splitting this parish into two parts and appending the two parts to two new district wards to the east on the other side of the M5 motorway.

The impact of these new proposals is devastating to this parish. The Parish Council would contend the proposals disregard the LGBCE aims of recognising 1) community identity and 2) natural boundaries.

1. The community identity of Woodvale, whilst having no obvious residential central point, is well established by those living in this area of rural, scattered development. Residents do not identify with the more urban settlements at Hagley or Catshill but do clearly feel an affinity with fellow residents of the rural hamlets found between Waseley Hills to the north, Stoneybridge to the west, Wildmoor to the east and Timberhonger to the south.

Residents relate to Woodvale as a definite area, they identify with the district council's Woodvale member and with the County Council's Woodvale division. The abolition of Woodvale will disenfranchise Bournheath residents by forcing them to be subsumed into the proposed Catshill wards and turning them away from their established community network. The issues that challenge Catshill ward representatives are not the same as those that challenge the Woodvale ward representative. The Parish Council fears that Bournheath will be neglected and its residents will be isolated.

2. Chapter 3 of LGBCE's 'Technical Guidance, July 2012' paragraph 3.5 states:

"Included in the community identities and interests criterion is the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable, and which will not break local ties. Our aim is to identify clear and long-lasting boundaries for wards and electoral divisions. We also take into account factors such as the location and boundaries of parishes and the physical features of the local area when drawing boundaries."

Bournheath Parish Council would like to point out that any local ties between it and Catshill were broken more than fifty years ago when the M5 was built. To re-instate them now would be contrary to LGBCE's own guidance.

The M5 motorway acts as a natural boundary to the east of Bournheath; it is akin to a brick wall along the eastern edge of the parish. However the new proposals ignore this boundary by seeking to add Bournheath village to the newly created Catshill South ward and the Wildmoor part of the parish to the newly created Catshill North ward. The motorway acts as a constant physical noisy barrier between Bournheath to the west and Catshill to the east. The only points of access between the two parishes are by way of road bridges at two points – Rocky Lane and Stourbridge Road, a pedestrian bridge and a tunnel at Wildmoor Lane.

The boundary to the west and south of Bournheath parish is less well defined and therefore lends itself more easily to amalgamation with the parishes of Dodford with Grafton and Belbroughton and Fairfield. In contrast the barrier to the east of the parish, the M5 motorway, is so obvious a boundary that it seems odd for it to be breached.

The Parish Council understands LGBCE's need to 'secure equality of representation' but fears that in so doing LGBCE has given this greater importance than its other criteria namely to 'reflect the identities and interests of local communities' and 'to secure effective and convenient local government'.

The Parish Council would hope that the LGBCE, having given the residents of Bell Heath the opportunity to state their case, will provide similar consideration to the residents of Woodvale, for whom the revised proposals have a much more considerable impact due to the total eradication of their existing ward and the dismantling of their existing community ties.

It is suggested that the Woodvale ward remains as now with the inclusion of Bell Heath to support equality of representation whilst achieving the LGBCE aims that will 'reflect the identities and interests of local communities' and 'secure effective and convenient local government'.

Yours etc.  
Gill Lungley MILCM  
Clerk to the Council